



# **Best Practices in Law Enforcement Mentoring**

Maj. Irick (T.J.) Geary  
University of South Carolina  
Division of Law Enforcement and Safety  
February 2, 2015

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the SC Certified Public Manager Program  
Class of 2015

*I choose to risk my significance,  
To live so that which came to me as a seed  
Goes to the next as blossom  
And that which came to me as blossom,  
Goes on as fruit.*

—Dawna Markova (2008)

## **Background**

The University of South Carolina Division of Law Enforcement & Safety (DLES) is a police department comprised of approximately 70 sworn officers who are empowered with state-wide jurisdiction. DLES is comprised of a uniformed patrol section, investigations, and other specialized units. The majority of officers are assigned to the patrol section. Officers are usually hired to fill entry-level patrol officer positions before becoming eligible to promote into supervisory or specialized positions. Previously certified officers with varying degrees of law enforcement experience are hired from other agencies, but the majority of new officers hired are beginning their law enforcement careers with DLES. Many are new college graduates, but some come from the military or private sector employment.

New officers face several challenges as they begin their careers. A very competitive hiring process is itself lengthy and arduous. Over the course of several months, applicants are subjected to a series of screenings to include multiple interviews, a polygraph, a background investigation, and psychological testing. If hired, new officers complete pre-service training before completing 12 weeks of residential training at the state police academy. Academy training is paramilitary in nature and includes uniform inspections,

marching, formation runs, and weekly tests. Failure of a test results in dismissal from the academy. Trainees are permitted to go home on weekends but must remain at the academy during the week where they have limited contact with family and the “outside world”. Between pre-service and academy training, new officers will be subjected to physical demands such as being shot with a Taser and being sprayed with pepper spray. They will undergo significant stress in emergency vehicle operations, defensive tactics, firearms, and scenario-based training. Upon graduation, new officers are assigned to field training officers who will evaluate their performance for approximately 15 weeks to determine if they are suitable to work in a solo capacity. While remedial training is offered and strides are made to retain employees, failure to successfully complete field training is grounds for dismissal. In addition to the physical and emotional stress of obtaining and retaining employment, new officers have the added stress of rotating shift work, fitting into a new culture, dealing with life and death situations, duty-related physical confrontations, and a host of other issues.

The impetus for exploring a mentoring program at the Division of Law Enforcement & Safety can be summed up in an almost universal truth declared by Inzer and Crawford, “Mentoring is too beneficial for it not to be formally implemented in an organization. Informal mentoring will always occur” (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). DLES has seen the loss of several young employees over the past few years that circled around issues of poor judgment. The young officers who have fallen into these unfortunate circumstances had someone influencing them, but it did not appear to be someone having a *positive* influence.

Officer A had been with the department for under a year. He and a few other officers had gotten together off-duty for a social event. A subsection of that group (to include Officer A) continued beyond the initial event and went to another establishment where



more alcohol was consumed. The night ended with Officer A getting into a collision and being charged with driving under the influence, thus ending his law enforcement career.

In another instance, Officer B, who had also been with the department for less than a year, attempted to stop a vehicle for a minor equipment violation. When the vehicle attempted to flee, Officer B pursued him in violation of department policy. After a brief chase, the suspect vehicle stopped suddenly. Officer B found himself in unfamiliar territory and fearful of the vehicle's occupants. He reversed his vehicle and returned to his patrol area at a high rate of speed. Since he had not yet relayed any information to dispatch, he then called in the attempted stop, to include the fact that the vehicle was not stopping (as if it were occurring in real time). Per policy, the on-duty supervisor called off the pursuit (which had already occurred, unbeknownst to him). A manager's review of the officer's in-car video the next morning revealed the discrepancy. What causes some officers to, when faced with two paths – one clearly appropriate and the other clearly not, to choose the inappropriate path?

In addition to the above incidents, a number of less severe incidents have occurred over the last three years during which time DLES has simultaneously seen over 50% turnover in its patrol ranks due to promotions, transfers to specialized units, retirements, and separations. While the influx of new, young officers has helped yield benefits such as increased productivity, it has also injected a large number of officers whose limited experience and relative immaturity have left them vulnerable to temptation and negative influences.

## Introduction

Mentoring is not new and has been defined in various ways. A mentor in its simplest form is “an experienced and trusted advisor” (*Oxford Dictionaries*). The term originated from the name of a character in Homer’s *Odyssey*. Mentōr was the name of the man responsible for guiding and providing wise advice to King Odysseus’ son, Telemachus. (Inzer & Crawford, 2005). The concept of mentoring has existed in the form of apprenticeships since the middle ages when boys would learn and work towards journeyman status under the guidance of a master tradesman. Formal mentoring has long existed in the world of academia before more recently spreading to private sector business practice. It has only been very recently that formal mentoring, above and beyond the almost universally accepted idea of formal field training, has been adopted by select law enforcement agencies. (Sprafka & Kranda, n.d.). Zachary (2005) defines mentoring as “a reciprocal and collaborative learning relationship between two (or more) individuals who share mutual responsibility and accountability for helping a mentee work toward achievement of clear and mutually defined learning goals” (p. 3). He goes on to state that “mentoring, at its fullest, is a self-directed learning relationship, driven by the learning needs of the mentee” (p. 3). This definition more closely resembles the duties of and the relationship often found with a field training officer. An alternative definition of mentoring is:

a relationship between two individuals, usually a senior and junior employee, whereby the senior employee takes the junior employee “under his or her wing” to teach the junior employee about his or her job, introduce the junior employee to contacts, orient the employee to the industry and organization, and address social and personal issues that may arise on the

job...Psychosocial support centers on the enhancement of the protégé's sense of identity, competence, and effectiveness as a professional, and includes friendship, acceptance, and confirmation. (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, p. 2).

While this definition has some overlap with the first, it has a component often overlooked in traditional field training programs, namely a focus on more social and personal aspects of adapting to the culture of a law enforcement agency. The psychosocial aspects such as friendship and acceptance are rarely highlighted in field training as the relationship is frequently more rigid, instructional, and directive.

The available literature suggests mentoring can lead to a number of benefits to the organization, the mentors, and the protégés. Some is research based while some is anecdotal, but the consistency across sources certainly supports a reasonable expectation of the benefits. Organizations with successful mentoring programs have been found to have less employee turnover as well as "increased organizational learning and employee socialization" (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, p. 5). Mentors have been found to have the success of their own careers enhanced through the process. Mentors also report "career growth" and "personal growth and satisfaction" (Allen, Finkelstein, & Poteet, p. 5). As could be expected, the protégés themselves stand to gain the most. Benefits include: "higher compensation and faster salary growth, more promotions and higher expectations for advancement, higher job and career satisfaction, and greater career and organizational commitment" (Allen, Finkelstein, Poteet, p. 5). Because a correlation exists between these benefits and *successful* mentoring programs, it is important that an agency's program is designed and implemented in such a way to maximize its chances of being successful.



## **Best Practices**

The literature suggests that clearly delineated responsibilities and expectations be laid out for both the mentors and protégés (Zachary, 2005; Sprafka & Krenda, n.d.). This formalization of the mentoring process should increase consistency, help ensure different protégés are receiving similar benefits, and allow for accountability for mentoring partners. Sprafka and Krenda (n.d.) propose the following responsibilities for mentors:

- Encourage and model value-focused behavior
- Share critical knowledge and experience
- Listen to personal and professional challenges
- Set expectations for success
- Offer wise counsel
- Help build self-confidence
- Offer friendship and encouragement
- Provide information and resources
- Offer guidance, give feedback, and cheer accomplishments
- Discuss and facilitate opportunities for new experiences and skill building
- Assist in mapping career plan (pp. 3-4).

They stress that the mentoring relationship must involve mutual commitment and that the protégé must share responsibility for his or her own development. The following responsibilities are suggested for protégés:

- Clearly define personal employment goals
- Take and follow through on directions given
- Accept and appreciate mentoring assistance

- Listen to what others have to say
- Express appreciation
- Be assertive – ask good questions
- Ask for help when needed
- Share credit for a job well done with other team members
- Respect the mentor's time and agency responsibilities (Sprafka & Krenda, n.d., p. 4).

Regarding the selection of mentors, it would be easy to simply select the best officers/employees and expect that they would be the best mentors. This is a fallacy often seen with promotion of supervisors. While technical skill or knowledge would be a good attribute for a mentor or supervisor, it is one small ingredient in a recipe for success. Allen, Finkelstein, and Poteet (2009) instead suggest selection based on certain characteristics. They provide the following list of knowledge, skills, and abilities critical to successful mentors:

- empathy
- ability to role model behaviors the organization wants emulated
- confidence
- listening and communication skills
- technical knowledge
- credibility
- commitment
- enjoy helping others
- patience
- ability to read and understand others



- credible and trustworthy
- interpersonal skills/ability to work well with others
- ability to teach, provide direction and guidance
- willing to share knowledge (p. 33)

Once a mentor pool is established, selecting the appropriate mentor from the pool that will provide the best match with the protégé is critical. The literature consistently encourages a deliberate matching of mentor to protégé based on compatibility. While all types of factors, even race, gender, and age, may contribute to compatibility, those types of factors should not be the sole, or even primary, factors used. Johnson and Ridley (2008) suggest to an overreliance on those types of factors may limit opportunities for certain protégés. They argue that a broad base of factors should be considered but that “personality, communication style, personal values, and career interests are especially salient matching variables” (p. 76).

Law enforcement workplace mentoring is currently being conducted at several departments across the country (as well as internationally). The City of Charleston Police Department (CPD) and the Rock Hill Police Department (RHPD) are the only two law enforcement agencies in South Carolina whose mentoring programs appeared in a web search. After speaking with Lt. Chris Hefner via telephone, he admitted that RHPD’s program was no longer active, leaving the City of Charleston as the only example of a successful program found to have gained any notoriety in the state. Sgt. Tom Adams, CPD’s recruiter and mentoring coordinator, provided some of the challenges and successes encountered by his agency. One challenge, which highlighted a significant difference between CPD and DLES, is the sheer magnitude of CPD’s program. CPD hired 66 new officers in 2013 and 40 new officers in 2014. Because their program is 18 months in

duration, they had over 200 officers (100 mentor/protégé pairs) actively involved with the program at the same time (nearly three times the number of officers employed by DLES). The City of Charleston has had an active police officer mentoring program since 2009. The idea for their program was born out of rank and file officers who suggested the program to the chief in a meeting. It was intended and continues to exist primarily to help retain new officers. Sgt. Adams believes that new officers who are hired from out of town, especially those without the benefit of prior law enforcement work, benefit the most as they are new to, not only a new career, but a new city as well (T. Adams, personal communication, January, 2015).

When asked for a specific anecdotal example of when the mentoring program helped to salvage a career or made a significant difference in the retention of an officer, Sgt. Adams immediately thought of an example. Officer C was hired by CPD and moved from the state of New York. He was new to the state, the culture, and the department. Officer C was paired with a mentor to whom he felt a strong connection. Officer C's mentor helped him to navigate the city, recommended housing, and even helped him find a local church. All of these things formed Officer C's connections to the department and the community. These connections helped him deal with the added stress of leaving his comfort zone to uproot and move to a new city. Officer C and his mentor have remained close beyond their official pairing (MacDougall, 2010; T. Adams, personal communication, January, 2015).

When asked what a department hoping to start a program should guard against or be prepared for in the way of obstacles, Sgt. Adams thought for a moment. He said he was surprised to find that one of the biggest issues in sustaining the program has been ensuring that the mentors themselves embrace and commit time to their protégés. He went on to clarify that officers working opposite rotations from their protégés, officers who work a lot

of extra-duty/overtime assignments, and officers with significant family or outside commitments will sometimes neglect their protégés and have to be reminded of the importance of regular contact and outreach. When asked for a weakness of their program, Sgt. Adams said he wished they had a stronger evaluation stage at the end of an officer's mentoring. When asked for a copy of his agency's mentoring policy, Sgt. Adams laughed. He said, "That's a great idea. I guess that's something else we need to look at. We don't actually have one" (T. Adams, personal communication, January, 2015).

### **DLES Officer Survey**

As a way to seek buy-in and see the perspective of the possible benefactors, ten DLES officers were provided a short survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) to get their impressions of a potential mentoring program and to solicit feedback on what parameters should be set if a program is created. The officers ranged from 22 to 46 years of age. Their law enforcement experience ranged from two months to four years, though their time employed by DLES ranged from one month to approximately a year a half (two had experience at another agency before being hired). The small but significant sample represents a fair cross section of the available patrol officers as it is comprised of three African-Americans and seven Caucasians and is comprised of eight males and two females.

All ten officers unanimously agreed that they themselves would have benefitted from the assignment of a mentor as a new officer. Officers were asked to select the three areas where a mentor would be most helpful (options were listed but officers were also permitted to write in an area not listed). Seven officers stated that dealing with the inherent stress of law enforcement was one of the areas where a mentor would be most beneficial. Six officers stated that one of the areas a mentor would be most beneficial would



be providing policy/legal guidance for work-related issues. Five officers stated that one of the areas where a mentor would be most beneficial would be when dealing with ethical dilemmas. Acclimation to the department's culture and acting as a sounding board for personal issues/problems each garnered four votes.

Most of the officers surveyed (80%) said they would be comfortable having a mentor from their own chain of command, while all of them said they would be comfortable having a mentor supervisory rank who worked outside their own chain of command. Half of the officers said that mentors should not be capped at a certain rank. The others believed it should be capped with no two officers agreeing on the rank at which it should be capped. While 80% of officers surveyed believed that mentor should have *at least* 1 year of law enforcement experience, three officers believed that mentors should have at least three years experience. Two officers believed a minimum amount of experience should not be necessary for mentors.

## **Conclusion**

In considering the experiences of other agencies, the best practices presented through research, and the suggestions of surveyed officers, a framework for mentoring new DLES officers can be created. Paramount to having a successful program is a willingness and buy-in on the part of those involved in the proposed system. DLES will be proceeding with a "soft" roll out of mentoring with a selected group of new hires. By beginning with a small group, methods and systems will be able to be tested and validated before subjecting more people to it. A draft policy has been developed (Appendix 2). This policy will be vetted through the normal policy process before implementation. Some forms to include a

pairing questionnaire (Appendix 3), mentor guidelines (Appendix 4), and a mentor evaluation (Appendix 5) has been developed.

Initially, mentors will be selected from volunteers within the non-supervisory ranks of patrol personnel. Mentors will be required to have one year of law enforcement experience. Many officers at DLES are fairly new; therefore, to require more than a year of experience would severely limit the pool of non-supervisory personnel. An added benefit is that newer officers will have a better idea of the current academy demands. Future consideration will be given to expanding the program to include higher ranking officers. Likewise, consideration will be given to possibly expand the program to include the mentoring of new supervisors by existing supervisors. It is possible that the mentoring program could serve as a training/proving ground for future field training officers and supervisors. As mentors rise through the ranks, their mentoring experience will rise with them. Eventually, the formal mentoring program could lead to a deeply engrained mentoring culture whereby officers at all levels are informally mentoring officers under their command.

Almost as important as mentor selection is the chemistry between a mentor and his or her protégé. A pairing survey has been developed for DLES and is available (Appendix 3). The survey was based loosely on the survey used by the City of Charleston Police Department with several fields added to paint a more complete picture of the officer. An additional measure of compatibility could be predicted through the use of a DISC assessment. All other compatibility factors being equal, officers will be assigned mentors who work on their shifts. This should ease the issue of conflicting schedules brought up by Sgt. Adams. It will also make mentors more readily available for ethical, legal, policy issues as they arise which will satisfy the desires of many of the DLES officers surveyed.

A framework has been created for implementation of a successful mentoring program at the USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety. Recent incidents would indicate that a need exists and the particular tenure demographics of the uniformed patrol section make for a particularly ripe environment for early intervention. The benefits commonly attributed to mentoring programs appear to be the ideal remedy. While some details remain to be worked out, a calculated but determined move to implement a program soon would be prudent. As Pablo Picasso said, "Action is the foundational key to all success." As the program is implemented and tested, minor course adjustments can always be made.



## References

- Allen, T.D., Finkelstein, L.M., & Poteet, M.L. (2009). *Designing workplace mentoring programs: An evidence-based approach*. West Sussex, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Inzer, L.D., & Crawford, C.B. (2005). A review of formal and informal mentoring: Processes, problems, and design. *Journal of Leadership Education* 4(1), 31-50.
- Johnson, W.B., & Ridley, C.R. (2008). *The elements of mentoring*. New York, NY: Palgrave-McMillan.
- MacDougall, D. (2010, October 25). Mentor program helps retain police recruits. *The Post & Courier*. Retrieved from <http://www.postandcourier.com/article/20101025/PC1602/310259931>
- Markova, D. (2008) I will not die an unlived life. *Wide Open*. Newbury Port, MA: Conari Press.
- Mentor [Def. 1]. (n.d.). *Oxford Dictionaries Online*. In Oxford Dictionaries. Retrieved January 2, 2015, from [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american\\_english/mentor](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/mentor)
- Sprafka, H. & Kranda, A. (n.d.). *Institutionalizing mentoring programs into police departments*. International Association of Chiefs of Police.
- Zachary, L.J. (2005). *Creating a mentoring culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

**Survey questions provided to select DLES officers:**

Do you think that a personal, assigned mentor would have been beneficial to you as a new officer?

In what areas would he or she have been most beneficial? (rank order top three areas as 1-3, with 1 being the most important).

- dealing with ethical dilemmas
- acclimating to the department's culture
- dealing with the inherent stress of law enforcement
- dealing with personality conflicts (with FTO, supervisors, coworkers, etc.)
- act as a sounding board for personal issues/problems
- providing policy/legal guidance for work-related tasks
- other (specify what)

What period of time should the official mentor period entail?

- until one year past date of employment
- until one year past date of academy graduation
- until two years past date of academy graduation
- other (specify what period)

Would you feel comfortable having an assigned mentor from your supervisory chain of command?

Would you feel comfortable having an assigned mentor of a supervisory rank but from outside your chain of command?

Should mentors be capped at a certain rank?

- no cap
- lieutenant (assistant bureau commander)
- sergeant (shift/unit supervisor)
- corporal (assistant shift supervisor/investigator)
- master patrol officer (field training officer)
- patrol officer

Should there be a minimum experience requirement for mentor officers?

- No minimum
- At least one year of law enforcement experience
- At least two years of law enforcement experience
- At least three years of law enforcement experience

## Draft Policy X.XX Mentor Program

### I. POLICY

It is the policy of the USC Division of Law Enforcement and Safety to provide new police officers with programs and opportunities to maximize their potential for successful transition into their new work environment. This program establishes a formal mentoring system in order to assist them in their acclimation to the Division's culture, their successful completion of the academy, and continued career growth.

### II. DEFINITIONS

- A. Mentor – an experienced and trusted advisor.
- B. Protégé – a person being advised and developed by the mentor.

### III. PROCEDURES

#### A. Program Administration

1. Administrative responsibility -- The responsibility of administering the Peoria Police Department's role in the mentoring process shall lie with the Operations Bureau Commander or his designee. This person shall be referred to as the Mentor Coordinator.
2. When new entry level officers begin their careers with this agency, they come with many questions and concerns which include: whether they will fit in; whether they will have the opportunity to learn and grow; whether they will be challenged; how they will perform and how their performance will be measured; and most importantly, whether they will stay with the agency. As a result, it is critical for new employees to believe that the agency cares about their career development.
3. As an integral part of the recruiting, hiring and training process, each newly hired police officer will be paired with a veteran officer who has agreed to serve as a mentor to the new officer.
  - a. The Mentor Coordinator will review the background and skills of the mentors and select the most suitable mentor for the new hire based on available compatibility data.
  - b. The Mentor Coordinator will contact the mentor and provide them with the background on the new hire.
  - c. The Mentor Coordinator will contact the new hire and provide them with name and telephone number of the mentor.
  - d. Participation in the mentoring program shall be mandatory for all previously unsworn, newly hired, police recruits. Lateral officers may participate in the program but are not required to do so.



- e. The initial contact between the mentor and the new hire will occur prior to the new officer's start date.
- f. The protégé will remain assigned to the mentor for a period of 18 months or one year post-graduation (whichever is longer).
- g. Mentors will not simultaneously be an FTO for the same new hire.

B. Mentor Coordinator: The Mentor Coordinator is responsible for administering and overseeing the mentoring program. The duties include the following:

1. Coordinate and schedule the introduction of the new hire to the mentor.
2. Recruit, train and maintain the mentor pool.
3. Maintain mentor skills/background database.
4. Schedule and conduct mentor meetings.
5. Maintain and review mentor program evaluations.
6. Evaluate and adjust the mentoring process when necessary.
7. Ensure that mentors are provided with expectations of their responsibilities.

C. Mentors: The mentors are the key component to a successful mentoring process. They have been identified as individuals who have a strong desire to participate in the process and are recognized by their peers as role models. Their duties include the following:

1. Contact new hires prior to the date of hire and explain the mentoring function.
2. Meet personally with the new hire and ensure a positive introduction to the agency during his or her initial week of employment.
3. Answer questions and be observant of the new hire's transition.
4. Provide insight and an overview of academy expectations.
5. Encourage and model value-focused behavior
6. Provide personal guidance and support as needed, e.g., suggested housing, school, and childcare needs.
7. Provide feedback to the Mentor Coordinator of concerns and/or conflicts.
8. Make weekly contact with the protégé while he or she is attending the academy
9. Attend protégé's academy graduation.
10. Make weekly contact (email, telephone, or in-person) with the protégé until his or her successful completion of the field training program.
- j. Make monthly in-person contact with the protégé during his or her first year of employment
- h. Attend regularly scheduled mentor meetings regarding the mentor program and provide feedback for improvement.

D. Exceptions: Should a recruit decide, for whatever reason, that they do not need a mentor assigned to them, they will meet with the Mentor Coordinator to discuss the decision before it is finalized. If a mentor or protégé wishes to be reassigned to another mentor, the Mentor Coordinator shall be notified and the changes made.



**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY  
OPERATIONS BUREAU**



**Mentor Guidelines**

- Confidentiality is paramount to a successful mentor/protégé relationship. Unless forwarding information to the mentor coordinator to advocate or assist the protégé or unless required by policy to disclose information (e.g. policy violation, criminal violation, etc.), exchanges with your protégé should be kept in confidence.
- Provide guidance: Define the problem/issue, give advice, and use common sense.
- Be honest. Answer questions truthfully. If you do not know something, seek assistance.
- Prepare your protégé for the rigors of academy life (separation from family, paramilitary environment, physical training, etc.).
- Personality conflicts: If a conflict occurs, identify the cause. If it would be beneficial to the protégé, request reassignment through the mentor coordinator.
- Initiate the first contact with your protégé.
- The mentor program is not a replacement for the field training program. The mentor may communicate with the FTO to better assist the protégé, but should not involve him/herself in FTO matters, otherwise.
- Set a good example by modeling appropriate behaviors for your protégé.
- The key to building a meaningful bond with your protégé is consistent and meaningful contact.



**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
DIVISION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SAFETY  
OPERATIONS BUREAU**



**Mentoring Program Pairing Evaluation**

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_ Protégé: \_\_\_\_\_

My protégé and I have have been paired for approximately six months. During this time, we have met approximately \_\_\_\_\_ times.

I feel we have established enough trust to allow us to work well together.

Yes

No

Not Sure

I am comfortable discussing areas of concern with where I believe I can offer assistance.

Yes

No

Not Sure

I believe my protégé is comfortable discussing areas of concern that he/she believes I can assist with.

Yes

No

Not Sure

I believe that I have assisted my protégé to successfully transition at DLES.

Yes

No

Not Sure

What is going well in the pairing?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What could be going better in this pairing?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Overall, I believe this pairing

\_\_\_ is effective

\_\_\_ may prove to be effective with some additional time.

\_\_\_ is ineffective and should be terminated.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date